

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
One Corliss Park
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

MEETING MINUTES

Date: July 18, 2005

Time: 6:00 PM

Minutes recorded by: Tracy Karasinski

Minutes Approved on: September 21, 2005

Interpreters: Jonathan Henry, Rosa Norberg, Paul Giard

Minutes

I. Call to Order

The meeting of the RI School for the Deaf Board of Trustees was called to order by Trustee Florio at 6:05PM in the RI School for the Deaf Cafeteria.

II. Roll Call of Board of Trustees

In Attendance: Bonnie Abols, Carol Dorros, Steve Florio, Tracy Karasinski, Neil Leahey, Maureen McEntee, Phil Wheeler

Travis Zellner recently announced his resignation from the Board via email. It was noted that an official letter of resignation should be sent to Commissioner McWalter's office with a copy to the Board of Trustees.

III. Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes

a. June 9, 2005

- i. Motion** was made by Trustee Abols to accept the minutes of June 9, 2005 as submitted. Seconded by Trustee Wheeler. Approved unanimously.

IV. Reports

a. Interim Director

- i. John Plante** highlighted points from his Interim Director's report.
 - 1. Addition to Director's Report:** J. Plante, H. Litterst and D. Topol attended a school improvement team meeting facilitated by RIDE on 7/13/05 with Woonsocket. Focus was how to support the school improvement process.
 - 2. Trustee McEntee** expressed concern about the 66% graduation rate for RISD reported in the Journal. J. Plante explained that these data were based on 3 students in 03-04, one of whom dropped out. This year's class of 15 students graduated with a 100% graduation rate.

- a. Discussion took place regarding the need to project graduation rates based upon individual student needs and tracking graduation rates over time to support planning and school improvement.
 - b. **Action:** It was recommended that a letter be sent to parents referencing the recent Journal article and explaining the statistics reported by RIDE.
 - c. John Carty noted that two RISD students were featured in Saturday's (7/14) article on scholar athletes.
- b. Coordinators
 - 1. H. Litterst reported that 30 students were enrolled in the summer program, 7/5 – 7/28, for continued reinforcement of academic and communicative skills.
 - 2. C. Hollingworth provided an extensive written report for Transition.
- c. Finance Director
 - i. W. Hannon highlighted written report. A surplus of approximately \$2,000 was anticipated for fiscal year end.
- d. Committees
 - i. Finance
 - 1. No written report. Committee will meet to initiate FY06-07 budget planning process prior to September.
 - ii. Personnel
 - 1. Trustee Abols highlighted items from the written Personnel Committee report.
 - 2. Discussion took place regarding the Board's role and responsibility to evaluate the Director/Interim Director and the identification of an appropriate evaluation tool.
 - 3. It was recommended that goals and objectives be developed to establish benchmarks against which to conduct an objective and meaningful evaluation of the Director. The absence of a strategic plan makes this particularly challenging. It was noted that an evaluation tool be developed prior to hiring a new director and that work had been done previously to develop such a tool.
 - 4. **Motion** by Trustee Dorros to establish a planning retreat for the Board and school administration to do short-term goal setting for the upcoming 05-06 academic year. Seconded by Trustee Wheeler. Approved unanimously.
 - 5. Trustee McEntee asked about job descriptions for the vacancies noted in the Director's report. S. Salisbury responded that the vacancies have yet to be posted and said that all positions have approved job descriptions with the exception of the Interpreter position. The interpreter position is currently a Council 94 position and the

description is not applicable to the duties to be performed. Discussions are occurring with State Personnel with regard to this issue.

6. Discussion took place regarding the need for the Board to approve all new positions and/or changes to existing positions.
7. It was recommended that a spreadsheet listing position vacancies and the reasons for the vacancy be provided to the Board prior to position postings to help identify staffing needs and the flow of resources to meet the changing needs of the student population.
8. Trustee Florio asked how many teachers had been evaluated during the past academic year in light of the goal of evaluating 1/3 of the teaching staff annually. J. Plante responded that 2 teachers had been evaluated and that limited administrative resources and a vacancy in the Assistant Director's position have delayed this process.
9. Trustee Florio asked about the projected status of the auditory/oral program. J. Plante said that currently 9 students are enrolled for the Fall with additional students expected.
10. Discussion took place regarding the administrative, staffing and financial challenges associated with implementing and sustaining the auditory/oral program. Tuition for this program is currently \$26,000 for students not residing in Cranston.
11. It was recommended that the administration provide the Board with identified/projected needs to be addressed with recommendations.

iii. Building Committee

1. Trustee Dorros and Hannon highlighted written report. An architectural firm has been selected and a contract awarded. Next steps include two additional days of information gathering meetings will be held. All interested parties are encouraged to meet with the architectural firm and building committee members to share their ideas and concerns regarding the new school. Written information about the history and experience of the design firm was disseminated. Site visits will tentatively be conducted August 25th and 26th. Construction is projected to begin at the end of 2006 at the earliest.

iv. Strategic Planning

1. W. Hannon reported that federal monies have been identified to conduct a school-wide analysis, inclusive of strategic planning. The specific next steps need to be determined in collaboration with RIDE. An RFP will need

to be developed soliciting bids for a strategic planning facilitator.

2. **Motion** was made by Trustee McEntee for the committee to develop and pursue an RFP based upon previous BOT discussions prior to the next Board meeting. Trustee Dorros seconded. Approved unanimously.

v. Director Search

1. Addressed under Old Business.

vi. Finance Director (addendum)

1. Contract to continue legal services must be approved and signed by the Board chair.
2. Discussion regarding how to address signatory issues in the absence of an appointed Chair and/or Vice Chair.
3. **Motion** was made by Trustee Wheeler for any item approved by the Board and requiring the Chair's signature be signed by ALL Trustees in lieu of a Chair until such time as the Commissioner formally appoints a Chair. Seconded by McEntee. Discussion ensued. Motion failed 3-4.
4. **Motion** by Trustee Wheeler for documents requiring Board approval and subsequent Chair signature shall be signed by the quorum of the Board members present in lieu of a Chair until such time as the Commissioner formally appoints a Chair. Seconded by McEntee. Passed unanimously.
5. **Motion** by Trustee Leahey to approve the contract for legal services for FY05-06. Seconded by Trustee Abols. Passed unanimously.

V. Old Business

a. Director Search Process

- i. Trustee Florio reviewed written committee report provided at previous meeting. It was clarified that the process developed by the committee has not yet been sent to the Commissioner for approval, but was waiting for BOT review and approval.
- ii. Several questions and concerns were raised with regard to the process as recommended. Item to be tabled for further discussion at the next meeting.

b. Board of Trustees Chairperson

- i. Trustee McEntee reported on her efforts to contact the Commissioner's office regarding the appointment of a Board chairperson. No response despite repeated telephone calls and emails. Discussion took place regarding the BOT's grave concern over the lack of an appointed chair.
- ii. **Action:** Trustee McEntee to send a certified letter asking the Commissioner to appoint a chairperson, noting importance of major school projects before the BOT including the hiring of a new director, strategic planning and building of a new school.

- iii. J. Plante noted that the candidate expressing an interest in joining the BOT was still interested, but unable to attend tonight's meeting.

- c. Board Meeting Schedule

- 1. Discussion regarding which night of the week and day of the month was best for the BOT to meet.
 - 2. **Action:** Jake Camara will be asked to address this issue.

VI. New Business

- a. Strategic Planning.

- i. Addressed under Strategic Planning report.

- b. Interpreter Recommendations

- i. J. Henry stepped out of the role of interpreter to report that there were many interpreter issues throughout the state currently. It was noted that BOT meetings required highly skilled interpreters and the length of the meetings was a deterrent. Written recommendations will be provided at a future meeting.

Adjournment

- i. The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 PM.